

## Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 A-01 OPR-02 SY-05 OC-06 CCO-00 MCT-01

AID-05 PC-01 /078 W

-----081814 181704Z /43

R 181125Z AUG 77

FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7955

INFO AMCONSUL MADRAS

CINCPAC

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, CE

SUBJ: OUTBREAK OF VIOLENCE IN NORTHERN PROVINCE

1. WHEN WHAT STARTED AS AN OUTBREAK OF VIOLENCE OF THE SORT THAT PERIODICALLY OCCURS IN JAFFNA BEGAN TO SPREAD AND TAKE ON COMMUNAL OVERTONES, THE GOVERNMENT PROMPTLY STEPPED IN AND CLAMPED A CURFEW ON AFFECTED AREAS, KURUNAGALE AND ANURADHAPURA DISTRICTS. THE VIOLENCE HAS SUBSIDED AND THE POLICE, WITH THE HELP OF THE SRI LANKA ARMY AND NAVY, ARE MAINTAINING ORDER.

2. ON AUGUST 16 AN ALTERCATION BETWEEN POLICE, MOST OF WHOM ARE SINHALESE, AND TAMIL MERCHANTS AT A BAZAAR IN JAFFNA TRIGGERED A SERIES OF CLASHES BETWEEN THE POLICE AND THE TAMIL POPULACE THAT RESULTED IN FIVE DEATHS, SCORES OF INJURIES, AND CONSIDERABLE PROPERTY DAMAGE. THE PREVIOUS DAY, AUGUST 15, IN AN APPARENTLY UNRELATED INCIDENT, A SINHALESE POLICE

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OFFICER HAD BEEN SHOT BY A TAMIL YOUTH DURING A ROUTINE INVESTIGATION. NEWS OF THE UNREST AND VIOLENCE IN JAFFNA SPREAD AND ON AUGUST 17 SINHALESE REPORTEDLY BOARDED THE COLOMBO-JAFFNA TRAIN IN THE ANURADHAPURA AND KURUNEGALA AREAS AND, ACCORDING TO EUROPEAN PASSENGERS ON THE TRAIN, ATTACKED AND ROBBED TAMIL PASSENGERS, INCLUDING WOMEN AND CHILDREN.

3. THE GOVERNMENT SENT A HIGH-LEVEL TEAM COMPRISED OF ARMY COMMANDER GENERAL SEPALA ATTYGALLE, ACTING SECRETARY TO THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE W.T. JAYASINGHE, AND INSPECTOR GENERAL OF POLICE STANLEY SENAYAKE TO JAFFNA ON AUGUST 17. COINCIDENTAL WITH THEIR VISIT, ARMY TROOPS WERE DEPLOYED TO JAFFNA FROM ANURADHAPURA AND COLOMBO TO STRENGTHEN EXISTING MILITARY FORCES. ARMY CHIEF OF STAFF BRIGADIER GENERAL PERERA, REPUTEDLY THE OFFICER TO WHOM IMPORTANT SECURITY ASSIGNMENTS ARE GIVEN, WAS SENT TO JAFFNA ON AUGUST 18.

4. BOTH THE GOVERNMENT AND THE TULF LEADERS ARE PLAYING DOWN THE POSSIBILITY OF THESE BEING COMMUNAL CONFRONTATIONS. IN AN AREA, HOWEVER, WHERE THE SECURITY FORCES ARE PREDOMINANTLY SINHALESE CONTROLLING TAMILS AND WHERE RUMORS ARE RIFE AND SPREAD RAPIDLY, THE POTENTIAL FOR INCIDENTS TAKING ON A COMMUNAL COLORATION IS GREAT. THE TIMING OF THE OUTBREAKS IS UNFORTUNATE. COMING AT A TIME WHEN THE GOVERNMENT IS MAKING OVERTURES TO SETTLE THE TAMIL PROBLEM AND WHEN THE TULF LEADERSHIP HAS INDICATED IT IS WILLING TO LISTEN, THE OUTBREAK COULD BE A SETBACK TO THOSE EFFORTS. IT WILL CERTAINLY COMPLICATE THE TULF LEADERSHIP'S TASK OF PERSUADING THE MILITANT TAMIL YOUTH TO COMPROMISE ON LESS THAN A SEPARATE STATE.

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## Message Attributes

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**Review Markings:**  
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